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C O N F I D E N T I A L KAMPALA 000193

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TAGS: PREL MOPS EAID KPKO ET SO ER KE UG

SUBJECT: UGANDA: VOTE ON APPROVAL OF SOMALIA DEPLOYMENT  
INITIATED

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

¶1. (U) On January 31, ruling party parliamentarians rejected the Defense Minister's motion to short-circuit parliamentary procedures to move forward a resolution to approve the Ugandan military's deployment to Somalia. In a 45-43-4 vote, ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) parliamentarians refused to suspend a three-day rule required for the introduction of motions. Only the ruling party and few independents were present. The opposition had walked out of parliament on January 30 in protest of the government's refusal to release Peoples' Redemption Army (PRA) members who had been granted bail in court.

¶2. (C) During debate over the motion to suspend the three-day rule, NRM members argued that "rushing the resolution" was not in the national interest or the party's. They argued that the opposition needed to be present to discuss an issue of this magnitude. The parliamentarians also requested additional information on what other countries would be joining Uganda and how large the force should be. They expressed concern that 1500-2000 Ugandan troops would not be able to protect themselves without the presence of additional African contingents. One ruling party MP angered the Speaker by accusing the government of "not playing by the rules." Others accused the Parliamentary Speaker of trying to push through the resolution. The Speaker's staff told poloff privately that President Museveni would be calling many members on the carpet for not supporting the suspension of the rules.

¶3. (C) Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Henry Okello Oryem expect the vote on the resolution to be on Tuesday, February

¶6. They both said that the Speaker was working with the opposition leadership to persuade opposition members to return to Parliament. Oryem bemusedly described the vote as "democracy in action" within the ruling party. Several opposition members had arrived after the vote, including Reagan Okumu, an outspoken government critic. He told poloff separately that many opposition MPs would support the deployment to Somalia because stability in the Horn of Africa was important for Uganda. However, the government needs to assure the opposition that the necessary funding is in place, and that the Ugandan troops will be joined by other contingents.

BROWNING